



## South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



# 129TH MOBILIZED FOR DEPLOYMENT

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment has received their official mobilization order for deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 129th and its 20 assigned members are scheduled for deployment in February 2013. The unit received an alert order for possible deployment in October. The mobilization order confirms the unit will deploy overseas.

The mission of the 129th is to provide public affairs support to units across the state, as well as to deployed units in support of a combined, unified or joint operation. The detachment uses print and broadcast journalists to help tell the story of U.S. military forces.

The unit's headquarters is located in Rapid City with a detachment in Sioux Falls.

The unit will report to Fort Dix, NJ, to complete several weeks of theater specific training prior to deployment overseas. This will be the third mobilization for the 129th. The unit was mobilized and sent to Fort Riley, KS, in 2003 and also deployed in support of U.S. Central Command in Qatar and MacDill Air Force Base, FL, in 2006.

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## SDNG TRAINS WITH BOMB SQUAD

The South Dakota National Guard 82nd Civil Support Team worked through a new training scenario involving the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation's bomb squad and personnel from the National Park Service at the Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Wednesday, April 11. The exercise gave South Dakota's all-hazard response team, the 82nd CST and the state's DCI bomb squad the opportunity to test their equipment and procedures while working together. The CST specializes in chemical, biological and radiological detection while DCI has expertise with the disposal of explosive ordnances.

The emergency response exercise was based on a scenario in which a Mount Rushmore park ranger and his bomb detection dog discovered two suspicious packages in the parking lot. One of the packages was leaking fluid causing the ranger and the dog to become ill.

Twenty-two members of the CST and five members of the DCI bomb squad paired up to investigate the suspicious packages. Having a combination of chemical and bomb materials further enabled both the CST and DCI to test how the teams will work together in a real life event, said Maj. Dale Gadbois, 82nd CST, operations officer. "Our Soldiers and Airmen benefit from this training by being able to interact with other agencies in our area with the local first responders, FBI, DCI, and the National Park Service here at Mount Rushmore," said Gadbois. "It's important to practice this in a peace time environment, and the more we practice the better off we will be if an event like this would occur."

The CST has multiple trainings throughout the year with various state and federal agencies. Each exercise has a unique scenario to give personnel opportunities to train and ensure everyone is well-rounded in their fields.



## "THE WELCOME" TO BE SHOWN IN BROOKINGS, SD

SDSU's Armed Forces Association and the VFW Post 2118 will host a free showing of "The Welcome" at the Cinema Five Theater (1450 6th Street) in Brookings on Saturday, April 21, at 10:00 am. Admission is free.

The "Welcome" offers a fiercely intimate view of life after war: the fear, anger and isolation of post-traumatic stress that affects vets and family members alike. The audience will be awed by the honesty and courage of the veterans. This movie will help all understand the role we play as our veterans try to find their way home.



## NEW VA INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE BENEFITS DELIVERY TO VETERANS AND FAMILIES

The VA has announced the national deployment of claims transformation initiatives to 12 regional offices in the remaining months of fiscal year 2012 to improve benefits delivery to veterans, families and their survivors. This transformation is part of the VA's goal of processing all disability claims within 125 days at a 98 percent accuracy level by 2015.

The 12 regional offices to begin the deployment of the transformation initiatives include: Huntington, WV; Hartford, CN; Portland, OR; Houston, TX; Cleveland, OH; Des Moines, IA; Boise, ID; Phoenix, AZ; New Orleans, LA; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Atlanta, GA; and Newark, NJ. This deployment follows four pilot programs at Indianapolis, IN, Wichita, KS, Milwaukee, WI, and Fort Harrison, MT, in 2012.

The VA's transformation plan is based on more than 40 measures that were selected, evaluated, tested and measured from over 600 stakeholder and employee innovation ideas.

During the national deployment, the VA will further track and gauge the integrated effects of the transformation plan to reduce the backlog of disability claims and provide veterans, their families, and survivors with more timely and accurate claims decisions. The VA expects to deploy the transformation plan to the remaining 40 regional offices throughout calendar 2013.

The major components of the transformation plan that will be nationally deployed include:

- The Intake Processing Center, which adds a formalized process for triaging claims documents and other mail, and drives faster and more accurate association of mail with veterans' claims files;
- Segmented Processing Lanes, which allow claims that can be more easily rated to move quickly through the system and the more complex claims to be processed by the VA's more experienced and skilled employees;
- Cross-Functional Teams, which support a case-management approach to claims processing that minimizes rework and reduces processing time; and
- The Veterans Benefits Management System, which is a new electronic claims processing system that employs rules-based technologies to improve decision speed and quality.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS DAY

The theme for the 2012 Administrative Professionals Day® is: "Admins, the pulse of the office." Administrative Professionals Day will mark its 60th anniversary on April 25, 2012. Over those decades, the job of an administrative professional has changed dramatically thanks to new tools, techniques and seismic shifts in the economy and culture itself. But admins have remained the steady center of efficiency through it all, helping ensure that jobs get done right, on time and under budget. Admins are one of the engines of business, particularly in a complex economy. In a world that demands the accurate and speedy movement of digital information, admins are masters of data. And they do this while maintaining their more traditional role as the gatekeepers for many customers, clients and employees.

Quite simply, admins are the pulse of the office.





## MILITARY CHILDREN HONORED DURING THE MONTH OF APRIL

Department staff "Purpled Up" Friday, April 13, as a sign of appreciation for the nation's military children. South Dakota's Operation: Military Kids (OMK) program invited everyone to wear or display the color purple as a visible way to support and thank military kids for their strength and sacrifices. Sheila Snyder, state OMK coordinator, says 2012 is the first time that "Purple Up for Military Kids" Day has been noted in South Dakota.

Governor Daugaard has proclaimed April as "Month of the Military Child" to honor military youth who have been impacted by deployment. In his proclamation of April as Month of the Military Child, Governor Daugaard urged all citizens, business and government leaders to observe the month with activities that honor, support and thank military children.

OMK is an effort between the U.S. Army, South Dakota 4-H, American Legion and Boys and Girls Clubs of America. The South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service administers the program.

For more information on Operation Military Kids, visit [http://www.operationmilitarykids.org/public/getInvolvedBy.aspx?state=South Dakota](http://www.operationmilitarykids.org/public/getInvolvedBy.aspx?state=South+Dakota)



Audry Ricketts, Christi Kuiper, Larry Person and Kevin Bowen

As we celebrate the "Month of our Military Children", please remember these brave, resilient children who silently serve our country too. Thank them for the role they play in the military community.



## OMK PRESENTS FIRST LADY WITH MILITARY THEMED BOOKS

Operation Military Kids (OMK) presented First Lady Linda Daugaard with books about military children and deployments.

Operation Military Kids (OMK) works to help children whose parents or family members are deployed in the military. OMK traveled across the state hosting "Month of the Military Story Time" at local libraries and schools.

Monday, the first lady was presented with three books for the Rawlins Library in Pierre—"The Adventures of Brisky Bear & Trooper Dog Back Home Again"; "Havoc at the Hillside Market"; and "My Story: Blogs by Four Military Teens."



## SDNG TO RELOCATE SIX UNITS

The South Dakota Army National Guard will be relocating six units throughout the state. Approximately 215 Soldiers from the Miller, Platte, Redfield, Salem, Webster and Winner units will eventually conduct their drill training at other locations. The SDARNG will go from being stationed in 28 communities to 22.

Five of the unit armories are co-located with the school districts and their lease with the SDARNG will be terminated. Exclusive control of the Salem armory will be turned over to the city. The future use of the armories' space will be determined by the respective school districts and community leaders.

The unit relocations are a result of several factors including federal budget cuts, U.S. Army restructuring and the construction of a new Regional Readiness Center in Watertown. The re-balancing being enacted at the national level has caused the SDARNG to trim its current force of approximately 3,300 Soldiers by 258 traditional (part-time) Guard positions and 19 full-time positions by Sept. 30, 2012.

Additionally, many of South Dakota's 29 Army Guard facilities are becoming obsolete. Fourteen armories are more than 40 years old, and 10 are more than 50 years old. Funding available for armory maintenance falls far short of what's needed to adequately maintain the aging facilities. According to SDARNG leaders, the relocation and consolidation of these units to more centralized locations will save money, maximize resources, provide better training opportunities and develop more cohesive units that will be ready when a crisis or disaster strikes. "With a mission to train for war-time operations and respond to state emergencies, it is the responsibility of the South Dakota National Guard to ensure that South Dakota's sons and daughters, who have volunteered to serve their state and nation, have the best training and facilities available," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. "By consolidating our units to regional readiness centers, we will be able to maximize our resources and training capabilities."

- The Winner and Platte units are scheduled to relocate by October to Rapid City and Wagner.
- The Salem unit is scheduled to relocate by November to Yankton.
- The Redfield, Webster and Miller units will relocate to the new Watertown Readiness Center when its construction is completed in 2013.

"It is with genuine sadness that I announce these unit relocations because all six of these communities have supported the National Guard in a truly outstanding manner for decades," said Reisch. "But in the end, these changes will help the Guard be more fiscally responsible and enhance our training readiness status. The bottom line is that the federal government makes adjustments to funding, and we too must adjust our operations to ensure we can continue to respond to both our state and federal missions in a highly effective manner."

Units affected by armory closures:

- Winner: Detachment 1, 155th Engineer Company (33 Soldiers currently assigned)
- Platte: Detachment 2, 155th Engineer Company (34 Soldiers currently assigned)
- Redfield: Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion (38 Soldiers currently assigned)
- Miller: Detachment 2, Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion (13 Soldiers currently assigned)
- Salem: Battery B, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery (42 Soldiers currently assigned)
- Webster: Detachment 2, 147th Forward Support Company (54 Soldiers currently assigned)

## GOVERNOR DAUGAARD VISITS TROOPS IN KUWAIT AND AFGHANISTAN

Gov. Dennis Daugaard was in Kuwait and Afghanistan this week with two other Governors on a Department of Defense trip to meet with National Guard troops from the three states and get a first-hand look at military operations. The Department of Defense offers the trips to Governors, makes the arrangements and pays for them.

"The whole idea of the trip is to help Governors understand what their troops are going through and let the troops know that people back home are thinking about them, and encourage them and tell them we're proud of them and look forward to their safe return," Gov. Daugaard said.

While in Kuwait, the Governor met with South Dakota troops from Company C, 1st Battalion 189<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment of Rapid City and the 139<sup>th</sup> Brigade Support Battalion from the Brookings, Redfield, Watertown, Miller, Mitchell, Rapid City and Sioux Falls areas. While in Afghanistan he met with members of the 842<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Co. from the Sturgis-Spearfish area.

Gov. Daugaard said the trip to the Mideast has given him a better understanding of how our troops are deployed there. He said many of the soldiers he met are nearing the end of their deployments, and he received personal notes from some of them to deliver to family and friends in South Dakota.

"Our soldiers and airmen are doing well," the Governor said. "They are in good spirits and looking forward to getting back home."

Gov. Daugaard met Monday with Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta at the Pentagon, and the Governor also visited Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, where wounded soldiers are taken for treatment and rehabilitation.



## VA TO INCREASE MENTAL HEALTH STAFF

The VA has announced that they will add approximately 1,600 mental health clinicians – to include nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers as well as nearly 300 support staff to its existing workforce of 20,590 mental health staff as part of an ongoing review of mental health operations. The VA's ongoing comprehensive review of mental health operations has indicated that some VA facilities require more mental health staff to serve the growing needs of veterans. The VA is moving quickly to address this top priority. Based on this model for team delivery of outpatient mental health services, plus growth needs for the Veterans Crisis Line and anticipated increase in Compensation and Pension/Integrated Disability Evaluation System exams, the VA projected the additional need for 1,900 clinical and clerical mental health staff at this time. The VA will allocate funds from the current budget to all 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) across the country this month to begin recruitment immediately.

## USS SOUTH DAKOTA

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus announced that the next five Virginia-class attack submarines will be named the USS Illinois, the USS Washington, the USS Colorado, the USS Indiana, and the USS South Dakota. Mabus named the Virginia-class submarines to honor the great contributions and support these states have given the military through the years. "Each of these five states serves as home to military bases that support our national defense and provides men and women who volunteer to serve their country," Mabus said. "I look forward to these submarines joining the fleet and representing these great states around the world."

None of the five states has had a ship named for it for more than 49 years. The most recent to serve was the battleship the USS Indiana, which was decommissioned in October 1963.

- ◇ The selection of Illinois, designated SSN 786, is the second ship to bear the state name and is home to the Navy's one and only Recruit Training Command in Great Lakes where every enlisted sailor begins his or her service.
- ◇ The selection of Washington, designated SSN 787, is the third ship to bear the state name and the state's Puget Sound area, where the Navy's third-largest fleet concentration is located.
- ◇ The selection of Colorado, designated SSN 788, is the third ship to bear the state name. The second ship was a battleship that stood as the lead ship of her class and took part in the Tarawa invasion.
- ◇ The selection of Indiana, designated SSN 789, is the third ship to bear the state name and is the home to the Naval Surface Warfare Center, the Navy's premier engineering, acquisition and sustainment organization which supports our maritime warriors.
- ◇ The selection of South Dakota, designated SSN 790, is the third ship to bear the state name. The second ship was a battleship that also stood as the lead ship of her class and fought extensively in the Pacific theatre during World War II.

"Prior ships carrying the names of these five states stood as defenders of freedom on the water. Now these states will represent the latest and greatest technology ever assembled to submerge below the surface and project power forward," Mabus said.

These next-generation attack submarines will provide the Navy with the capabilities required to maintain the nation's undersea supremacy well into the 21st century. They will have enhanced stealth, sophisticated surveillance capabilities, and special warfare enhancements that will enable them to meet the Navy's multi-mission requirements.

These submarines will have the capability to attack targets ashore with highly accurate Tomahawk cruise missiles and conduct covert long-term surveillance of land areas, littoral waters or other sea-based forces. Other missions include anti-submarine and anti-ship warfare; mine delivery and mine-field mapping. They are also designed for special forces delivery and support.

Each Virginia-class submarine is 7,800-tons and 377 feet in length, has a beam of 34 feet, and can operate at more than 25 knots submerged. It is designed with a reactor plant that will not require refueling during the planned life of the ship, reducing lifecycle costs while increasing under-way time.

"I'm pleased that a third Navy ship is to be named in honor of South Dakota," said Governor Dennis Daugaard. "The first USS South Dakota was an armored cruiser that served in World War I. The USS South Dakota battleship that served during World War II had an especially storied history, winning 13 battle stars, and it's a fitting tribute that a U.S. Navy attack submarine will now carry that name around the globe. We are proud of those who served on our namesake ships in the past, and will be equally proud of those who have the honor of being assigned to this new vessel."



# Upcoming Events

Apr. 21—Women Veterans Symposium and Health Fair—Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn—Rapid City  
Apr. 24—SD Veterans Council—10:30 am—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls  
Apr. 27-29—VABHHCS Women's Retreat—Fort Meade  
Apr. 28—Military Order of the Purple Heart State Convention—Rapid City  
May 8—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Rapid City—1981 E. Centre Street—10:00 am  
May 9—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Pierre—520 S. Pierre Street—10:00 am  
May 10—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Brookings—520 Main Avenue—10:00 am  
May 11-13—DAV 73rd Annual Department of SD Convention—Brookings  
May 11—Veterans Town Hall Meeting—Brookings  
May 12—60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Display—Brookings  
May 16—Vietnam Veterans of America State Convention—Pierre  
May 19—Armed Forces Day  
May 28—Memorial Day  
Jun. 7-10—VFW State Convention—Brookings  
Jun. 9—Marine Corps League Department of SD Convention—Pierre  
June 9-23 Golden Coyote Annual Training Exercise  
Jun. 10-12—Dare to Dream Conference—Spearfish Holiday Inn  
Jun. 14—Flag Day  
Jun. 14-17—American Legion State Convention—Watertown  
July 21-22—Sioux Falls Air Show  
Aug. 27-29—VSO Annual Benefits School—Pierre

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